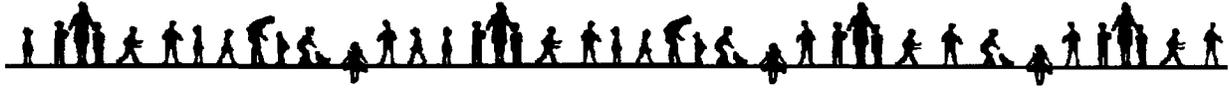


CONNECTICUT YOUTH SERVICES ASSOCIATION



April 4, 2007

Good afternoon Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and members of the committee. My name is Susan Radway EdD and I am the Director of Waterford Youth Services Bureau and President of the Connecticut Youth Services Association (CYSA). CYSA is the professional organization that serves as the collective voice of Connecticut's Youth Service Bureau system. The youth service bureau system, established by State statute 10-19m in the 1970s to address the growing concerns of substance abuse and juvenile delinquency, has grown into a unique statewide system of coordinated services for children, youth, and families. Today 99 Youth Service Bureaus serve 129 communities across Connecticut.

I am testifying in support of two bills, which have the potential to make positive changes in the way in which our state responds to the needs of children and youth. **Proposed Bill No. 5676, An Act Concerning Children of Families With Service Needs** and **Bill No. 6285, An Act Raising The Age of Juvenile Court Jurisdiction To Age Eighteen**, will both provide services to families at a time when they are facing difficult challenges.

In regards to HB6285, Connecticut is one of only three states that consider all sixteen and seventeen year-olds to be adults in the eyes of the criminal justice system. Returning sixteen and seventeen year-olds to the juvenile court system will allow for a much broader and cost effective array of intervention and rehabilitation services. Providing age-appropriate mental health, substance abuse, educational, job skill, and positive youth development programs are key components of a strong rehabilitation program, and are services that Connecticut's Youth Service Bureaus have been providing for close to four decades.

Many Youth Service Bureaus address Families With Service Needs cases through a Juvenile Review Board (JRB) Program. JRBs were uniquely designed by Youth Service Bureaus to provide a comprehensive approach to working with juveniles and their families in order to assess needs and develop a personalized service plan that provides both prevention and intervention services. With the JRB system in place, Youth Service Bureaus have the infrastructure necessary to serve Connecticut's families, as proposed by bills 5676 and 6285.

CYSA applauds the legislature for recognizing the importance of comprehensive services for families with children of all ages. The establishment of Family Support Centers in HB 5676 sounds like a duplication of what Youth Service Bureaus are already doing – with limited funding. Remembering that most Youth Service Bureaus are departments of municipalities, CYSA respectfully requests that Youth Service Bureaus be named in the language of the bill regarding who can apply for this funding as previously noted by Christopher Montes of New Britain Youth and Family Services in his prior testimony today. Youth Service Bureaus have extensive experience in community collaboration and assessment, which has resulted in the development of a wide variety of comprehensive services that address the needs of children and their families. The Connecticut Youth Services Association encourages the General Assembly to fully utilize Youth Service Bureaus and their nearly four decades of experience in youth development.

CYSA, the professional organization that serves as the collective voice of the Connecticut Youth Service Bureau system, is dedicated to promoting quality services for Connecticut's children, youth, and families.

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